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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that, although community cable television is one of the most dynamic (although experimental) elements of the Hungarian media structure, it is well on its way toward institutionalization. It is suggested that whether community cable television is able to retain the spontaneity, innovativeness, and elasticity of its early days may have a bearing on the future of Hungarian media systems in general. It is noted that, since the official go-ahead in 1984, 17 systems have come into operation, producing about 40 hours of programs a month at a fraction of the cost and capital investment of Magyar Televizio (MTV), and often operated by unskilled and unpaid personnel. The study presented in this paper deals with the expectations and real achievements of the emerging community studios. A closer, cultural look is taken at two cable stations where field observations were carried out, and where two opinion surveys were made among cable viewers. It was found that the responses to the survey were strikingly different for the two communities. General differences in the two communities, the founding of their respective systems, their programming, and the professional ideologies of the Hungarian cablecasters are described. In addition, the future of cable television is discussed in terms of broader perspectives where realities of Hungarian politics, economics, and new technology must be faced. (7 sources) (CGD)

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András SZEKFÜ:

Community Cable Television - Hungarian Perspectives

Community cable television is one of the most dynamic elements of the Hungarian media structure. Since the official go-ahead in 1984 17 systems have come into operation. The study deals with the expectations toward and the real achievements of the emerging community studios. A closer, critical look is taken upon two systems, where the author carried out field observations as well as two opinion surveys. The results are placed into the perspective of the democratization of local politics in Hungary.

Paper Presented to the 1986 International Television Studies Conference, London

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1. Introduction

In Hungary, the concept of cable television has got a meaning different to many other countries with more wealth and advanced technology. Hungarian cable systems have not superceded the technical standards of community antenna systems, yet. While in North America as many as 20-30 channels are offered by a typical cable system to subscribers, in Hungary, the present technical system cannot have more than 7 channels. The average size of the cable systems is relatively small: around 7700 households. All cable systems must carry the two national programs of Magyar Televizió /MTV/ and most systems feature the programs of one or more of the neighbouring countries, according to geographical positions. Locally originated programming makes up a very small part of the diet offered: weekly or fortnightly one to three hours of community informations can be regarded as typical. There is practically no entertainment programming originated locally. Two years after the official go-ahead in 1984 most of the Hungarian cable stations have retained something of their original experimental /and in some cases, amateurish/ character. From a sociologist`s point of view their situation seems to be /at least for the moment being/ open-ended. Local cable stations in Hungary are certainly on their way toward institutionalization. Will or can they retain in this process the spontaneity, the innovativeness and elasticity of their early days? The answer to this question may have a bearing on the future of the Hungarian media system in general, too.

This general relevance regarding Hungarian communication policy and the fact that Hungary is the first socialist

country to experiment with cable TV may explain the author`s interest in these modest community cable stations. The author has followed closely the evolution of cable TV in Hungary from the early forerunners in the late seventies on. He has visited most of the 17 existing systems and carried out /on behalf of the Mass Communication Research Centre/ two opinion surveys among cable viewers. /1,2/ He also co-ordinated and co-authored a case study on cable TV in Hungary, commissioned by UNESCO. /3/ The following analysis draws heavily upon these studies, particularly upon the surveys and field observations. An effort is made, however, to place the results in a broader perspective.

2., The Discreet Charme of the Cable

Community cable television is one of the most dynamic elements of the Hungarian media structure. Since the official go-ahead in 1984 17 systems have come into operation with a combined reach of about 130.000 households /a penetration of about 4%/. The 17 studios produce /if put all together/ about 40 hours of programmes a month. A penetration of 4% or a monthly output of 40 hours combined may seem minuscule when compared to data of the national Magyar Televizió /MTV/. One must not forget, however, that these programmes are produced at a fraction of the costs and capital investments of MTV, by hitherto unskilled /and in quite a few cases, unpaid/ personnel.

The whole development of cable studios took place almost totally spontaneously. There were no central orders or plans for this development. The central political decision was to allow for cable programme production but certainly not to

make it compulsory. The spread and growth of community cable in Hungary took place almost entirely as a response to local needs and strivings. The motifs for building community antenna systems are not really specifically Hungarian. A better reception of the national programmes, foreign programme reception, protection of the roofs, relative cheapness /when compared to individual antennae with similar capacity/ are common factors in most of the countries. More interesting is the question: why is it so appealing to make local programs for cable in a medium sized Hungarian town, the typical site of most cable systems?!

For a possible explanation let us have a look at Hungary`s media structure. Local communication here was always the domain of the printed press and has remained that way in the age of radio and television. /Neither of the electronic media has started local transmissions in Hungary./ From the 19th century beginnings to the political turning point of 1948/49 the local press developed according to market forces, including of course sponsorships from different political groupings. There was an abundance of newspapers on the local, regional and national levels: in 1938 there were 1.564 papers published, 376 of them "political" dailies and periodicals /4/. Though much could be said about lack of quality or political bias in these papers, the fact remains that most Hungarian towns and villages with a population of at least several thousand people did possess one or more local papers. After the centralizing efforts of the Hungarian stalinists in 1950 there remained only a fifth -334- of the papers /5/. Practically all the villages and all the towns except the county seats have lost their local papers. /Only 19 of the 100-odd towns in Hungary are county seats as well./ The

nostalgy for local organs has lingered on ever since. In the sixties and seventies new information needs, too, have arisen. In response to these the county dailies could increase their circulation as much as tenfold, but severe regulatory procedures have fended off most of the other towns and villages if they had tried to start /or re-start/ their own, really local papers. In contrast to the still very hard regulatory environment regarding the printed press, the above mentioned political decision of 1984 gave a relatively free way to iniciatives for starting a community cable system. The result could easily be foreseen: the energies in towns fighting in vain for a local paper were suddenly channelled into the direction of community cable. According to estimates, the number of Hungarian households connected to community antenna systems was around 300.000 in 1983. /6/ Starting local programs on these systems seemed to be an easy, relatively cheap, popular and "in" solution to the pressing needs towards local information.

3., A Tale of Two CATV-s

Well, pressing demands - but whose demands are we speaking of? Though in most cases the cable stations are "good" for both the population in general and the local administrative, educational etc. institutions in particular, it is useful to keep a clean sociological division line between these two kinds of clients. To be sure: in none of the 17 existing systems was there an articulated popular pressure present toward the founding of a community TV. The initiatives did not come from the elected representatives of the population /town councils/ either. To find out the sociological characteristics of the real initiators, let us

have a closer look at the most thoroughly researched and documented cases, the Pécs-Kertváros and the Budapest-Gazdagrét cable systems.

Both the Kertváros and the Gazdagrét systems cover recently built building estates which are near to but also separated from their respective cities. However, if we try to draw a matrix of their respective representation in local politics and in local media, the result will be the following:

Table I. R E P R E S E N T A T I O N IN

	local politics	local media
Pécs-Kertváros	poor	fair
Budapest-Gazdagrét	fair	poor

While Kertváros is the home of every fourth /or maybe already even every third/ Pécs citizen, there is no separate local political body like a district council to represent the particular interests of the inhabitants. In Pécs /pop. 175.000/ there are no districts in the administration. Though the town is historically and geographically divided into clearly distinguishable parts, this fact is not reflected in the management of the town, which is conducted by one single

body, the town council. However, in the geometrical centre of Kertváros there exists a huge "Educational Centre", which houses under one roof four /!/ elementary schools, one secondary school, a "house of culture", a library, a swimming pool, a canteen and last not least an audiovisual studio. If not every one but quite a few Kertváros inhabitants have something to do in or with the Educational Centre - as parents, theatre- or cinema-goers /performances take place in the central auditorium/, users of the library or swimmers etc. Though no one would admit to this, the Centre has acquired some sort of "de facto" representative functions in the life of Kertváros.

Budapest-Gazdagrét, while considerably smaller than Kertváros, seems to be in a better position regarding local representation. It belongs to the dynamic XI. district of Budapest. While Kertváros has no or little identity in local politics, Gazdagrét seems to have acquired an identity and the council of the XI. district is handling the problems of Gazdagrét with marked attention. Gazdagrét is still in the process of building and development, and not long ago, when the cable operations have started, there were practically no local institutions there. /The first cable TV programme was a transmission of the opening ceremony of the first elementary school in Gazdagrét./

Regarding media attention and exposure we find a reverse situation. Pécs, the fifth largest town in Hungary has got a well developed media supply: the county daily, the regional radio, the regional television all have their editorial offices and studios there. Strong emphasis is laid on the regional and local character of these media, but in fact

all of them /as their clients not resident in Pécs often complain/ are very much Pécs centered in their coverage. The inhabitants of Kertváros, in their quality of Pécs citizens, enjoy the privileges of the extended coverage of Pécs affairs and justly regard these as "their" media. Gazdagrét, on the other hand, belongs to the capital, where there is very little real local communication on the media level. Only one of the Budapest dailies, the evening Esti Hirlap is nominally "local", but this is hardly noticed by its readership. Magyar Rádió has got no Budapest local station, and Magyar Televizió has started a Budapest regional programme only recently and only one hour a week. Certainly, the "national" media edited in Budapest are very much Budapest-centered. But this is felt mostly by the 8/10 of the Hungarian population who do not live in Budapest and is not perceived by the Budapest population as an asset. Even though a considerable part of the contents of these national media is dealing with Budapest matters, Budapest citizens do not regard them as "their" local media. As a result, while the Kertváros citizens do have the feeling of having local paper, radio and maybe even television, the Gazdagrét citizen has no such experience. The differences are also clearly reflected in the histories of the respective cable stations.

In Pécs-Kertváros:

The cable system was founded by the Educational Centre and the Regional TV Studio in co-operation. /7/ Thus the actual promoters were all professionals: teachers, adult educators, tv reporters and editors and also some tv technicians. At the end of the third year of the cable tv's existence the Regional TV Studio lost its interest in the project and left. Since then the system is managed by the Educational Centre

alone.

In Budapest-Gazdagrét:

The idea of the cable system was proposed by a specially motivated tv-director to the vice president of the XI. district council. The system belongs legally under the XI. district council, but the day-to-day management is done by local inhabitants as social work, unpaid.

The two opinion surveys carried out among the viewers of the cable systems give clear indications of the effects of the situations described above. The same question was asked at both places:

"Where do you get information directly related to /Kertváros or Gazdagrét/?" The answers were strikingly different. In Kertváros, 24% of the respondents mentioned the cable system, whereas in Gazdagrét not less than 87% ! Not that the Kertváros inhabitants did not look at or did not like their cable TV. But their most important source of local information remained the county daily /with 58% of the respondents mentioning it/, then came face-to-face communication, the regional radio and only at the fourth place cable TV. At Gazdagrét, the cable TV was the most often mentioned source of information by a wide margin, followed by face-to-face communication /38%/, and national media with a combined mentioning of only 23%.

The difference may be attributed also to a difference in programming philosophy at the two systems. In Pécs, at the influence of the Regional TV Studio, the cable system offered monthly once /later twice/ a three hour programme, conceived and edited after the pattern of national television. There

were constant programming slots for education, culture, sports, a /local/ news magazine, there even was an evening tale for children before the newscast - just as on national TV. Most of the programs were pre-recorded, with an anchorman commenting live. In Gazdagrét, however, there is an hour of live public access cable programme every week. There is practically no premediated programme structure, the door of the studio is always open /literally/ and any Gazdagrét citizen can come down to the studio, make a comment or ask a question. Phoning in is practically impossible because of the scarcity of telephones in Gazdagrét. The studio /two garages converted in a do-it-yourself way/ is, however, no more than three minutes of walk from any point at Gazdagrét, so the interested viewers do come down to speak up, one or two persons every week. The topics of the programmes are in very direct connection with everyday problems at Gazdagrét.

4., Cablecasters' Professional Ideologies

Drawing upon the Pécs and Gazdagrét examples but also upon the observations during visits of other cable systems it seems possible to summarize the most widespread professional ideologies of the Hungarian cablecasters. The author is well aware that the types described below do not occur in such an ideally pure form. The concepts discussed here are, however, present in the consciousness of the Hungarian cable TV staff, as this can be documented both from personal statements and - much more importantly - from the programmes themselves.

a., The administrative - power orientation

The point of departure of the administrative-power orientation stresses the role of mass communications as a

tool for exercise of political control. It is rooted with institutional interests which lean towards expectations of the state and other political organs rather then to those of other institutions /cultural, health, physical recreation/ and to those of the economic enterprises. It conceives the cable television analogously to the national television and attempts the establishment on a small scale of the main programme types, genres, reporter styles as observed on national TV. Its references to the needs and wishes of the citizens are indirect, and hardly taken into account as this orientation does not deal with them directly. People are regarded only as clients of diffeent institutions. The elements of representative publicity - celebrations, ceremonies, anniversaries, state visits, frequently events with national or even international bearings - which are normally the domain of national TV's news coverage frequently appear in the admisistrative-power orientpd cable programmes as well. It is truly characteristic of this orientation that it will boast the imaginable widest licence, by calling the programme "City Television" even if factually it can only reach a limited percentage of the inhabitants . The administrative orientation also presupposes the highest possible technical standards as it is perceived that failures to do so diminish the expected image. The viewers are seen as expecting from cable TV a technological standard similar to national TV, otherwise the programme "would fall into disrepute". This orientation mistifies the "responsibility of the screen" and by continous insistence upon this it tries to upgrade its own licence. For this reason the operators try to avoid "mistakes" by preliminary documentations and scripts that cover every detail, and prefer prerecorded material to live transmissions. Should they still undertake a live

transmission, it is then considered as a sign of professional perfection, as a kind of exceptional bravour.

b., The concept of the "open studio"

In many ways this is the opposite of the former, yet sometimes they live together within one programme. It starts off with the servicing, clearly defined representative function of communications. Its basis of reference is the citizen regarded as active agent and participant in the local community. It has no particulat respect either for professionalism in programming or for the technical standards of national television and gives precedence to content requirements over formal execution. Programs made under this concept often seem to be long and boring to the outside observers yet the makers hold firmly that these are extremely interesting to the audience they are addressed to. As starting point for cable TV operations the live transmission is favoured, with prefabricated blocks of video only if that is absolutely necessary. Plenty of opportunity is allowed to interaction with the audience who either phone in or come to the studio personally during cablecasts. Children have a very significant part in the programmes, and not as "undersized adults" but as real kids. Cable Tv is regarded as a means of mobilization and activation. Groupings, associations and grass-roots movements are welcome clients. The importance of offices and institutions is measured by their part played in the lives of people and not by their place in the hierarchy. The professional ideology of the "open studio" brings the elements of the "small is beautiful" approach into cable televising.

c., The pedagogic ethos

The pedagogical approach adresses itself to society as a whole which has continuous need for education and tuition. Since it can surely count on the citizens` activity and interest as parents, that is why it adresses the viewers either as children or as parents. Cable Tv is regarded as an expanded school faculty or perhaps a secular church, where moral sermons can be delivered interpreting basic principles of morals for the audience. The pedagogical ethos considers the popularization of cultural values as its task, but sometimes the critical standars are set low for "local artists" and the like. From a technical point of view it does not raise particularly high expectations, but insists upon the didactically necessary minimum of visibility and audibility.

d., The technical orientation

Cable Tv stations have rallied a significant number of the local technical intelligentsia from all over the country. But this orientation is held not only by studio technicians - it is as common as the other three. This orientation virtually never interferes with the content matters, but it makes a special point of high technical quality. The technical standards ot national and even foreign TV-s are constant points of reference.

* * *

The author of this study believes that the various

combinations of the above four types are sufficient to describe most of the common attitudes among Hungarian cablecasters. It is assumed, that these concepts will undergo evolutionary changes especially when Hungarian cable TV will grow into maturity. The most exciting question is how the four dominant professional ideologies will deal with future challanges. To what extent will they get modified, what new concepts will have to be formed.

5. Future Needs and Trends in Cable Communication Policy

The evolution of cable television in Hungary has begun under circumstances, when, due to the already discussed relative inflexibility of communication policy it was practically impossible to begin experiments with other media /e.g. new local papers or local broadcasting stations/ initiated on regional level. Consequently, cable TV experiments became outlets of several different local communication needs, wich, in the case of a flexible communication structure, need not have been met or satisfied necessarily by cable television. On the other hand, political leadership is also looking forward to the development of cable TV with great expectation. It is expected that solutions can be found to a number of present and future communication problems, from local information to the assimilation and, to some extent, to the neutralization of the effects of satellite communication. /I.e. the influence of foreign satellites./

There is an increasing conviction among those concerned, according to wich cable TV can fill its role best if it can

become an integrated part of a coherent national communication policy. That is, in the future more flexibility is necessary in the handling of communication needs than at present. The conflicts of the contenders in the battle for the already scarce resources have to be made public and the communities would compete for media resources that are specifically satisfactory to their communication needs. In case of a flexible national communication framework the sphere of activity of the central communication policy would embrace coordination and selective support. Within such organic communication policy cable TV would be an enriching medium with its own potential for evolution, but would have the competition.

It is a very positive phenomenon that the Hungarian Post and the Hungarian Television, entrusted with supervision of the cable systems, interpret their task as that of advisory and coordinating bodies which can assist the cable studios in many ways, including training courses. At present the cable systems are not integrated into the national TV network system. They are regarded as experimental entities with local supervision and an operational licence wich is due to review in 1986. The process of licence renewal puts pressure on the operators to bring satisfactory results which will encourage the authorities to reissve the licence. A possible conflict may arise regarding the equipment. If a station can not purchase the high level and high cost equipment required by the technical experts of MTV /a powerful lobby with vested interests in hardware investments/ it may find its licence cancelled even if the programs the station supplied were satisfactory to all concerned.

The social environment of cable TV can be characterized by the increasing activity of concerned citizens' groups and active utilization of local financial and organizational resources. Cable television can play a useful part in the development of civil society in Hungary. Its important function is to become an alternative medium to satisfy local communication needs, which at present are much overshadowed by the national and regional levels.

The transformations taking place in the Hungarian society of the 1980's bring about the emergence of new information needs. The evolution of more participatory political processes has led to the introduction of a new electoral law which makes double nomination mandatory in most constituencies. This increases the necessity of political interaction betwen electorate and the political candidates thus bringing a new range of tasks for the media. It is expected that the autonomy of local political and administrative organs is to increase, with special regard to economic and developmental decision making. This will also put new requirements on local communications with wider reach and competence than before . It can be assumed that cable television may have an important role to play in the satisfaction in the context of arriving changes. Yet it must be stated that cable TV is neither going to become the only one, nor the most important local communication medium in Hungary in the coming years. Its growth for the time being is limited to towns that have communal antenna systems at their disposal. The development of entirely new cable systems for the purposes of cable TV or the cabling of villages is not on the horizont yet.

There is consideration that the experiments aimed at the utilization of the cable systems in other ways than televising are also becoming important and interesting phenomena. In several places such as Székesfehérvár, Zalaegerszeg, Kecskemét, experiments are in progress in the transmission of other signs through the cables of the antenna system. They include monitoring and control signals for the computerized optimalization of the energy consumption of the housing estate, emergency communications in case of malfunction of utilitilites, like faulty elevators, telemetrical readings of gas meters, etc. Such experiments may in the long run prepare ground for more interactive utilization of the cable systems. Their direct usefulness is in that they can contribute to the financing of the modernisation and expansion of the cable systems through the revenue generated by energy saving as tested recently in Kecskemét. At the Budapest-Gazdagrét housing estate the construction of an additional advanced experimental cable system for 3oo apartments is planned, to be carried out in cooperation with various state organs and companies. Apart from TV and radio programmes, this system would transmit telephone and digital computer signals through wide band cables. An integration of telephone and cable television may hardly arise in countries with a well-developed telephone network. In Hungary however, where the phone density does not even reach 15 lines for a 100 inhabitants, it could satisfy a very pressing need.

Inferring from the tendencies of the development of Hungarian cable television and experiences abroad, the following more important policy decision making situations and conflict situations can be foreseen as arising in the

course of the next few years:

a., Building cable systems

At what rate should cable construction in the country proceed and how should it be financed ? It is unlikely that in the present or optimal future economic situation major resources could be allocated for this purpose out of the central budget. Local state or enterprise support is more likely. Altough that can only be of limited extent, that is, these funds could cover the capital investment such as antenna, amplifier, studio equipment but certainly not the cabling and the connection of the individual apartments. Should the tests of extented utilization other then brodcasting prove economically beneficial / heating optimalization / some additional funds may arise from that source too. Ultimately, however, the decisive question will be whether the inhabitants who are potential customers would be willing to pay a one-time installation fee amounting to one month or half a month average wage. It would be better if there was a possibility for deferred payment such as extended government loans, but that again depends on the general economic situation of the country. The attraction of prospective programme offer of the cable systems will have decisive influence on the willingness of the citizens to pay.

b. Maintenance and development of cable systems

The fees for the use and for the maintenance of the communal antenna systems were fixed by the authorities and

did not include the prospect of additional signals to a customer. /That is, at present none of the cable studios can rely upon subscription fees./ Presently deficit of most of the facilities can be avoided by the most minimal maintenance and thus a steady deteriorization of the systems. Additional funds for modernization or adaptation to new requirements cannot be found simply by raising the access fees.

Cable systems, however, must not only be maintained, but also be further developed. The need for qualitative tehnical development is of primal importance should the system be operational in the future. The present 7 channels capacity is already exhausted in some parts of the country by the Hungarian and foreign TV signals received. In West-Hungary two Hungarian, two Austrian, two Czechoslovak and two or three Yugoslav programmes can be received. This already exceeds the capacities of the present Hungarian cable systems. Due to this limitations the cable programme experiments are timed for Mondays in most places, when neither of the Hungarian programmes is on the air. This stopgap arrangement however, cannot continue for several reasons. One reason is that cable programmes are going to become more frequent. There is a pressing need for more channels e.g. for the purposes of paged teletext and for future needs when demand will arise for the transmission of satellite programmes. The only probable way for the qualitative technogical modernization of the existing cable systems seems to be through voluntary financing by the population. Acceptance on a large scale can be secured for this only if the new service will truly bring about radical novelty in respect of program attractiveness.

c. Problems of transmitting satellite programmes

On the basis of the level of her technical development, Hungary is capable of producing both satellite receiving antennae and the necessary amplifiers./Assuming the import of certain integrated circuits./ Working prototypes have already been produced for the reception of telecommunication satellites like ECS-1. Hungary will be covered by the footprints of many DBS satellites as well because of her central geographical position in Europe. It has been pointed out by many experts that reception through a central antenna and transmission of TV signals to the individual apartments through cable systems would be the most economic and aesthetic solution also regarding satellite transmissions. Only in areas where population density is small is individual reception economical - out of necessity. Since in the case of a cable system the costs of a satellite antenna would be shared out among thousands or even tens of thousands of subscribers, the capital investment per consumer to cover the costs of equipment would not be extremly high.

The reception of telecommunication satellites may pose financial problems if there is a down-link fee to be paid. The order of magnitude of the down-link fee for Hungary can reach US $ 100 000 annually which can be covered only from central national funds. In some cases the programme itself gets transmitted via a srambled signal and the copyright owner gets his revenue by leasing the de-scrambler.

Mass availability of satellite programmes demands also an adequate political decision. The situation is by no means simple. Hungary, as one of the signatories of the Helsinki Treaty, is an active supporter of international information flow and of the exchange of cultural values. In this spirit everyone may regard the viewing of the TV-programmes of the neighbouring countries, with inclusion of capitalist Austria, without limitation and distortion as natural. State-owned communal antenna systems carry these programmes in all parts of Hungary, as well as state-owned newspapers publish their daily programme schedules.

Satellite broadcasting will at first create a situation similar in some respect to foreign Tv reception. It would make little difference if one would receive the signal from Austrian Television by traditional terrestrial reception or via a satellite.

On the other hand, the future development of satellite broadcasting will bring about a situation radically different both quantitatively and qualitatively. The satellite reception of 10-20 programmes is a fully realistic possibility of the near future. Out of these, there will be some foreign programmes with a political profile diametrically opposed to Hungarian policies. And there certainly may be programmes with a cultural standard deeply below that of Hungary's carefully balanced national programme. The danger of the loss of, or at least damage to, the national identity is seriously discussed at international forums as well. Whether such implications are analysed from a technical or a political point of view, it seems unlikely that the decision to be made would be too radical. The

complete banning of satellite reception is not likely /if not even impossible in the long run/, nor is likely that every satellite programme without some constraints would be transmitted by the cable networks. The financial problems involved create another problem for concern. As in the rest of Europe the opinions are divided with regard to the usefulness as well, as the dangers of satellite telecasting. It will certainly take some time for communication policy to find an optimal answer to the challenge of the satellites.

d. Programme policy in case of self-made cable programmes

At present, cable televising in Hungary is - also in a legislative sense - at an experimental stage. The programme production practice of the studios is still unformed. It will take some time until programme structures best suited to needs of the local institutions and inhabitants can be determined. Attitudes and expectations of the individual viewers are not necessarily in parallel with those of the political, cultural, educational or economic authorities, which have already formed their ideas, strategies pertaining to the traditional mass communications. The institutions' expectations in relations to the new medium can be formed by way of analogy. The citizens, on the other hand, can articulate their demands only with a lot more difficulty, partly because they lack the necessary representation and experience. This kind of assertion of their interests may be manifested as the cable television is to provide novel and alternative services. This, however, cannot be achieved by following the existing pattern of present TV programme

structure because the national TV is ill suited to the satisfaction of local type communication needs.

Thus the growing Hungarian cable TV studios can introduce their alternative programme. The majority of cable TV studios conforms to the expectations of the established institutions, wich are conveyed by direct and effective means, rather than to the diffuse needs of the local citizens, which still await articulation. In this social context radically avantgarde programming experiments cannot be expected. In a few cases, however, where live casts are also undertaken, as in Pécs and Budapest-Gazdagrét, the specific possibilities of local communication can be observed.

e. The case of programme re-runs in cable TV framework.

Until the spring of 1985 matrials of outside origin occupied only a very modest place in the cable TV experiments. It is not as if there had been no demand for them. At the beginning some of the cable TV audience regarded this medium as the one that may exceed local communication needs. Frequently the repetition of adventures and animation films or of musical shows previously seen in cinemas or on TV, has been requested. The programme editors however, resisted this idea, due to their local programme licence as well as for fear of breaching the international and national copyrights. The re-runs of TV programs were attempted only by the Pécs cable system which was managed by MTV's Regional Studio, and the re-runs were films made originally by the

Regional Studio itself for the national network. This attempt was met with a positive response of the local audience as the programs` substance dealt with local issues which would also fit the licence regulations.

The Spring 1985 decision of the Presidium of the Hungarian Television rendered the re-runs privileges of their own programs available to cable TV networks without any charge. This has opened new opportunities and policy options for the cable studios.

Firstly the programmes` re-runs of the Educational Television in accordance with the requirements of the local schools. At present the majority of the schools are unable to schedule the children`s classes so as to follow the schedule of the TV programs.

Secondly the re-runs of particular programs in other parts of the day become possible. Management of the cable TV studio in one of the industrial towns regards morning re-runs of previous day programmes as importnt needs of viewers who are night-shift employees. These services are not provided by MTV.

And thirdly programme re-runs on cable systems will constitute a novelty in the programme structure, if an autonomous selection of offered material can be realized. Cable TV stations /wherever there is capacity of unused channels/, can increase the frequency of their cablecasts by providing a mix of repetitions from the national programmes and of short local informations.

The question,whether the cable TV will be able to transmit Hungarian films, produced by Mafilm requires appropriate legislation and analysis for economic benefits for all concerned.

Foreign movies and television programmes cannot be included under current conditions into the programmes of cable televisions, the reason being that obtaining copyright permissions is very complicated and cable TV studios would not be able to pay the prescribed royalties even in forints, let alone in hard currency.

f. Non-cable distribution of video materials made by the cable TV studios

At present, the studios are just getting to grips of the problems at the beginning of their operation. Revenue oriented video production can hardly come into consideration as even elementary programming tasks can hardly be satisfied in light of limited productions capacity. It is easily conceivable, however, that once the initial difficulties are surpassed,the cable centres will become producers on the Hungarian video-market. Sooner or later, the acquisition of all the necessary equipment will be fulfilled for this task and the studios will also have trained and creative manpower employed. Further, locally produced materials might be leased or sold beyond the studio's jurisdiction, thus to generate badly needed revenue, and this way the secondary utilization, circulation of materials made for their own purposes could also develop.

At the moment the situation is by no means simple from the legal point of view. The legal regulation process that deals with video is still at its initial phase. Since the making of video films is under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, the legal regulation of the video-productions guarantees primarily the interests of the established film studios. Should the cable TV studio produce several hours of material for tens of thousands of viewers daily, when regarded as video-studio, it will have neither production nor distribution rights for the reason of being newcomer in the media structure.

g. Technical problems

If technical problems are regarded as questions of policy, the simultaneous assertion of exactitude and flexibility seems to be the main concern. The starting point should be that community cable TV services could be provided even with limited quality equipment /ie. one camera /, or only non-professional recording hardware. It is possible to produce modest but useful live transmissions in this way as well. Naturally the quality of transmission can be increased should better video recorder and editing equipment be accessible. The beginning of cable TV should not commence with technologically elitarian attitudes.

h. Training, collaboration, representation

One of the most important initial tasks of the cable studios is the recruitment of a suitable staff.

Understandably, problems do already occur. But also much positive experience can be noted. Technical co-workers with the necessary basic knowledge, who could be retrained quickly, were easily found. Similarly the search for programming staff came up to local talent spotting and has brought many a new talent into the limelight. The majority of the applicants are young dynamic people between 20 and 30, with above average education with many, including political, interests. The example of the Pécs Regional Studio illustrates that among volunteers who attended the cable TV staff course a few even met the prequisites and standards of MTV. It must be stressed that development of cable TV could not avoid the negative trends of image and style mannerisms of national television. It is to be hoped that a further natural selection will take place with the passage of time.

From the training point of view as well as for the organization of future cooperation the need for the cable TV employees` representation arises. Its form and way of functioning are yet to be determined. It is bound to have representational tasks as well as those safeguarding interests. It may be necessary to get analitically acquinted with experiences of similar cable stations abroad. Such an association may be instrumental for succesful fostering of new cable TV programme ideas as well.

i. Connection with social research

Lastly, we have to mention the possible relationship between social sciences and cable televising. The cable TV experiments are equally objects and beneficiaries of

conducted research.

They are research objects, because, understandably, every new phenomenon in communications is accompained by a great interest shown by the researchers. Today, studies on cable television involve only a small group of communication researchers. It is likely that cable`s increasing significance will also attract the interests of sociologists and political scientists. The research of cable television also means a methodological challenge for mass communication research. - The methods fashioned for large, homogenious masses cannot be applied here without necessary modification.

On the other hand the studios are also beneficiaries of the research work. The conceptual elements exposed by the works of the past decade - such as the increasing importance of regional localization or the role of the new media - can be seen already in their "professional ideology " . Secondly, surveys were / or are going to be / carried out in many places and cablecasters increasingly rely on the results of the social sciences in the field of exploration of needs and possibilities. Conclusive recommendations are imperative ground work for future programming work.

It is not unlikely that certain results of the operation of the cable TV studios will in time become a matter of common knowledge, partly with the assistance of communication research , and that will perhaps have an invigourating effect on the work of the professional communicators as well.

6., Conclusions: The Will, The Way, If...

At the very beginning of this study we have formulated the question: will the spontaneity, the innovative spirit of the best community cable stations survive the pitfalls of the coming /and, it seems, unavoidable/ institutionalization? A little story may illustrate the case in point. While writing this study, the author had to accompany a group of American students on their visit to the Gazdagrét cable studio. The students, after having seen the tiny studio and having witnessed a live cablecast, had a little talk with some of the cable people. One of the guests, when asked about his opinion, replied: "Well, we too have community cable in the States, but this intimacy, where there are no telephones in the neighbourhood and people come here in person instead of phoning in is phantastic!" O.K., one would like to reply, let us now enjoy the fruits of underdevelopment, but what if in a few years' time there will at last be telephones in the Gazdagrét flats? What will then happen to the intimacy?!

Hungarian community cable stations /or at least the better ones/ seem now to be engaged in a race against time. Their voluntary cablecasters are getting tired, the originality of the programmes is slowly fading away, some of the studios are getting more and more like the national TV - without the professionalism and material resources of the latter, of course. On the other hand, in some places the originally unorthodox methods are slowly crystallizing into a coherent tradition. New personnel is then socialized not by previous experiences of the national programs, but by the already binding local tradition. Public access community TV is still a rarity in Hungary. Its greatest assets are those bright

young women and men, who can be found in an around the studios. If the "public access - non professional personnel" approach can become a strong and lively tradition before the energies and enthusiasm of the "founding fathers" do fade away, a continuity of years or even decades seems possible. On the other hand, the danger is real that the stations might loose their live contacts with the average people in their constituencies.

Now, I.G. is a Gazdagrét citizen, earning his living by being an engineer in the working hours. After hours he becomes a reporter-anchorman every third Monday. The time will come, when there will be some funds available for financing the studios, and I.G. will face a dilemma: should he become a /professional/ local cablecaster or remain an engineer /and possibly leave the then full-time job of a cablecaster to someone else?/ If he becomes a cablecaster, he will have to change his reference groups in a short time. His first loyalties then have to be focussed on his employer and on other professional cablecasters. He will not remain the Gazdagrét citizen asking questions - he will become the reporter of the studio who might even stay on after having moved eventually to another district. Hopefully, I.G will remain an engineer, looking at cable TV out of the jungle of Gazdagrét problems, at not the other way round.

If there is a will, there is a way - as long as there will be neighbourhood problems and conflicts, the will to speak up, to discuss and to shape some kind of solution for them will be present. The ways to do so are manyfold - local media need not and must not be restricted to local cable. In Hungary, the estimated 300.000 homes on communal antenna

systems signal the possibilities but also the limitations of cheap community cable. The establishment of new cables just for the sake of community programming is a slow, costly and tedious process if not rather exceptional. It is only too logical to envision a local communication structure built up from mutually complementary elements, i.e. from local radios, local papers and local cable stations, each in its own proper niche. And this is just the point where the realities of politics, economics and technology come into the picture, as we have tried to demonstrate in the course of this paper`s analysis. That`s the point where the "if"-s and the "how"-s take over...

Budapest, April 1986.

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